UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FIFTY-FIRST SESSION

Official Records

THIRD COMMITTEE
16th meeting
held on
Monday, 28 October 1996
at 3 p.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 16th MEETING

Chairman: Mrs. ESPINOSA (Mexico)

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 101: CRIME PREVENTION AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE (continued)*

AGENDA ITEM 102: INTERNATIONAL DRUG CONTROL (continued)*

AGENDA ITEM 158: QUESTION OF THE ELABORATION OF AN INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION AGAINST ORGANIZED TRANSNATIONAL CRIME (continued)*

AGENDA ITEM 103: ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 104: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OUTCOME OF THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN (continued)

*Items which the Committee has decided to consider together.

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of the publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-794, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

Distr. GENERAL
A/C.3/51/SR.16
4 September 1997
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: SPANISH

96-81671 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 101: CRIME PREVENTION AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE (continued) (A/C.3/51/L.5, L.6 and L.8)

AGENDA ITEM 102: INTERNATIONAL DRUG CONTROL (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 158: QUESTION OF THE ELABORATION OF AN INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION AGAINST ORGANIZED TRANSNATIONAL CRIME (continued) (A/C.3/51/L.10)

Draft resolution A/C.3/51/L.8

1. Mr. BUSALLA (Italy), introducing the draft resolution entitled "Strengthening the United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Programme, particularly its technical cooperation capacity" on behalf of the sponsors, who had been jointed by Argentina, Armenia, Georgia and Tunisia, drew the Committee's and the Secretariat's attention to the fact that, in the title of the English text, the word "crime" had inadvertently been omitted.

2. Questions related to crime prevention had become increasingly important to many States. For international cooperation in that field, the United Nations offered a universal forum where States from all over the world were part of an information network that allowed them to share experiences and, therefore, to strengthen their crime prevention institutions. That was why the United Nations structures in that field must be solid.

3. In 1995, the General Assembly had decided to upgrade the Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Branch to division level. That decision had emphasized the primary importance that the General Assembly attached to international cooperation in the field of crime prevention. Unfortunately, since the United Nations was going through a financial crisis, the new posts assigned to the Division had been frozen. That had hampered the Division's ability to respond to the growing number of requests for assistance and to the numerous mandates assigned by the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice. That was why the draft resolution requested the Secretary-General to ensure full implementation of that measure and to further strengthen the Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Programme by providing it with the resources needed for full implementation of its mandates. The other paragraphs of the draft resolution closely followed the previous year's text.

4. At the request of some delegations, and after having informed the sponsors of the draft resolution, his delegation wished to revise the draft resolution. The second preambular paragraph of General Assembly resolution 50/146, which had originally been omitted in order to shorten the draft resolution, would now be inserted as a new third preambular paragraph, which would read as follows:

> "Convinced of the desirability of closer coordination and cooperation among States in combating crime, including drug-related crimes, such as terrorist crimes, illicit arms trade and money-laundering, and bearing in mind the role that could be played by both the United Nations and regional organizations in this respect,".

The sponsors of the draft resolution hoped that it could be adopted by consensus, as in previous years.

5. Mr. FERNÁNDEZ (Spain), Mr. TARRASENKO (Russian Federation), Mr. WISSA (Egypt), Ms. KABA (Côte d'Ivoire) and Mr. CARRANZA (Guatemala) joined the sponsors of the draft resolution.

Draft resolution A/C.3/51/L.5

6. Mr. NAJEM (Lebanon), introducing an amendment to the draft resolution contained in document A/C.3/51/L.3 entitled "United Nations Declaration on Crime and Public Security", said that he was not trying to reopen the debate on the contents of the Declaration but would like to add the following paragraph to the annex of the draft resolution as the first preambular paragraph, after the words "The General Assembly,":

> "Recalling the Declaration on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations,".

7. The Declaration had been unanimously adopted at the end of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, in which all States had participated at the highest level. It was a very explicit Declaration which reflected the concerns of all States and provided a framework for activities relating to public security. The elimination of all forms of crime required dissuasive and preventive measures; the international community should deal with the underlying causes of crime as vigorously as it dealt with the effects and take preventive measures such as measures to promote socio-economic development. His delegation hoped that the amendment would be supported by all delegations.

Draft resolution A/C.3/51/L.9

8. Mr. TOLLE (Mexico), introducing the draft resolution entitled "International action to combat drug abuse and illicit production and trafficking" on behalf of the sponsors, said that the latter had been joined by Antigua and Barbuda, Belgium, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Myanmar and Namibia. The fact that the draft resolution was being sponsored by a large number of countries from all the geographical regions reflected the international community's commitment to further strengthening efforts aimed at combating that scourge.

9. The present comprehensive draft resolution was the outcome of substantial negotiations and consultations and constituted a contribution to efforts to streamline and enhance the efficiency of the General Assembly's action. The comprehensive treatment given in the draft resolution to that very complex and multifaceted problem had undoubtedly given a sharper focus to the Organization's efforts in that field. It was also a clear example of the spirit of cooperation existing in efforts to combat the drug problem.

10. After reviewing the contents of the draft resolution, he noted that the text was the outcome of broad and intensive negotiations during which all participants had demonstrated good faith and a constructive attitude. He hoped that the draft resolution would be adopted by consensus.

11. Ms. TOLLE (Kenya) and Mr. CHOMAR (Mozambique) joined the sponsors of the draft resolution.

Draft resolution A/C.3/51/L.10

12. Ms. WRONEC (Poland), introducing the draft resolution entitled "Question of the elaboration of an international convention against organized transnational crime" on behalf of the sponsors, who had been joined by Austria, Belarus, Georgia, Guatemala, Honduras, Hungary, Ireland, Malaysia and the Republic of Korea, said that the draft resolution was the result of intensive informal consultations. After consulting the Office of Legal Affairs, and bearing in mind the views of participants, it had been decided to revise paragraphs 1 and 2 by replacing the words "Member States" with the words "all States". She hoped that the draft resolution would be adopted by consensus.

AGENDA ITEM 103: ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN (continued) (A/51/3 (Parts I and II), A/51/38, A/51/90, A/51/180, A/51/210, A/51/277 and Corr.1, A/51/304 and Corr.1, A/51/309, A/51/325, A/51/391 and A/50/509 and Add.1)

AGENDA ITEM 104: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OUTCOME OF THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN (continued) (A/51/90, A/51/210 and A/51/322)

13. Mr. HADJIYSKI (Bulgaria) said that Bulgaria's views had been expressed in the statement made on behalf of the European Union on agenda items 103 and 104, whose conclusions and proposals it shared and supported.

14. At the national level, Bulgaria had taken a number of initiatives to implement the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women. The Council of Ministers had adopted a National Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women and a package of measures for its implementation. The Plan had been drafted by an inter-agency commission with the participation of numerous non-governmental organizations. It was aimed, inter alia, at promoting and protecting women's human rights; improving women's socio-economic status by guaranteeing their equal participation in labour and employment; alleviating and eliminating poverty among women; promoting the participation of women in decision-making at all levels and in all spheres of public and political life; improving women's health; and eliminating all forms of violence against women. The National Plan consisted of four main sections:

(a) tasks and activities of the Government for the achievement of the strategic goals;

(b) projects relating to women that were being implemented in conjunction with non-governmental organizations and international organizations;

(c) institutions and mechanisms for the implementation and monitoring of the National Plan; and

(d) resources for carrying out the measures adopted.

15. The package of measures adopted by the Council of Ministers was aimed at ensuring the achievement of the strategic goals and objectives set forth in the National Plan and, in particular, their proper funding. It should be noted that, in view of the budgetary austerity and the restrictive monetary and fiscal environment accompanying the structural adjustment of Bulgaria's economy,

effective attainment of the goals of the National Plan of Action would require the extensive cooperation of international organizations and institutions and also financial contributions.

16. Bulgaria reiterated its support for the activities of the United Nations aimed at achieving equality between women and men. In that connection, the Commission on the Status of Women deserved special mention. Bulgaria remained firmly committed to the implementation of the principles of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the attainment of its strategic goals.

17. Ms. TOLLE (Kenya) said that her Government was committed to implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action with a view to ensuring the full participation of women in all spheres of society, including the decision-making process and access to positions of power, in order to contribute to equality, development and peace in the world. The effective implementation of the Platform for Action required a commitment by Governments and international organizations and institutions to mobilize additional resources, and the formulation and implementation, at the national level, of specific measures to guarantee equality between men and women. The United Nations system had an important role to play in assisting Member States, including Kenya, in eradicating poverty among women, who constituted more than half the world's population.

18. Kenya commended the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women for amending its reporting guidelines (A/51/277) in order to ensure that reports included information on measures taken to implement the Platform for Action. It invited all Member States to support that very timely decision.

19. Concerning the report of the Secretary-General on improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat (A/51/304), she welcomed the measures being taken to realize the targets set by the General Assembly. Although the goal for the representation of women in posts subject to geographical distribution had been achieved, progress at decision-making levels was slow and insufficient. In order to achieve full equality (50-50 gender distribution), time limits must be established. Kenya urged the Secretary-General to appoint qualified African women to senior posts in the Secretariat in conformity with the principle of equitable geographical distribution. In order for the United Nations Development Fund for Women to continue its efforts to contribute to the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in developing countries, particularly in Africa, and to integrate the needs of women in programmes at all levels, its operational activities must be strengthened by increasing financial support from Governments, multilateral financial institutions, private donors and non-governmental organizations. The Fund should also submit a report directly to the Third Committee.

20. As a follow-up to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and in order to promote gender equality and improve the status of women in its development process, Kenya had strengthened its national coordinating committee in collaboration with the national focal points in various ministries and institutions in order to fulfil its national obligations under the Platform for Action. It had also integrated the gender perspective in sustainable development policies and programmes; strengthened the mechanisms for assessing

the impact of development policies on women; appointed women to senior government posts, such as high court judges; launched community programmes for mainstreaming women's activities consistent with national objectives; established income-generating development programmes designed to upgrade the standard of living of rural and urban women, which had enabled groups of women to purchase land, build houses and business premises and initiate viable projects in the areas of health, water, industry and housing; and promoted and improved the quality of education for girls.

21. Kenya had also enacted laws enabling men and women to buy and inherit land and property on an equal footing and was making every effort to promote voter education programmes for women with a view to increasing their participation in Parliament and local administration. The Government continued to encourage the more than 100 non-governmental organizations to deal with women's issues as part of their development agendas with a view to upgrading women's standard of living in the rural areas. Kenya would continue to make every effort to ensure that women were integrated in development and had greater access to education, health and productive resources.

22. Ms. MESDOUA (Algeria) said that the measures contained in the platforms for action of the various decades for the advancement of women were intended to serve as guidelines for an ongoing process of adaptation to constantly changing national situations. In that connection, the Beijing Conference had provided an opportunity to assess the progress achieved and determine what measures should be taken in order to ensure that women entered the twenty-first century as full members of society. Although it behoved to Governments to lay the groundwork and find the resources for implementing programmes of action, it was also crucial for the United Nations, in addition to integrating women in its policies and programmes and providing equal opportunities in the Secretariat, to guarantee the implementation of the Platform for Action at the international level and the promotion of international cooperation for its implementation.

23. In the United Nations, the Commission on the Status of Women, particularly since its mandate had been strengthened, played a fundamental role in following up the implementation of the medium-term plan and the Platform for Action; it would also help the Economic and Social Council to coordinate progress reports prepared by other United Nations agencies. The Economic and Social Council should integrate the needs of women in the work of the technical commissions and ensure the system-wide coordination of the results obtained in meeting the targets for women set at all recent United Nations conferences.

24. United Nations bodies that worked specifically on the advancement of women should be able to discharge their responsibilities in an effective manner. Hence, the human and material resources provided for in the United Nations budget must be sufficient to enable the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the International Training and Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and all other bodies working for the advancement of women to give real substance to the Platform for Action.

25. Algerian women, who participated actively and on the same footing as men in all efforts to realize their country's goals, played a pivotal role in the process of development, democratization and national renewal. Efforts to involve women in the establishment of modern society in Algeria had resulted in ever greater numbers of skilled women entering the labour market and taking on more senior positions. Moreover, efforts were being made to encourage women to exercise their right to freedom of association and expression, as guaranteed by the Constitution. Finally, evidence of Algeria's commitment to equal rights for women could be found in its ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its support for the principle of elaborating an optional protocol to strengthen the mechanisms for the implementation of the Convention.

26. Ms. GORDON (Jamaica), associating herself with the statement made by the representative of the Bahamas on behalf of the Member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that, although concern had been expressed at the end of the Fourth World Conference on Women about the difficulty of implementing its outcomes, the Secretary-General's reports and the statements made in the Committee seemed to indicate that progress had been achieved in the area of follow-up - a little in some areas and much more in others. Nonetheless, all States recognized that much more needed to be done.

27. Jamaica would continue to support initiatives taken by the Economic and Social Council, its Commissions and related bodies and other United Nations agencies working for the advancement of women. As outlined in the CARICOM subregional plan of action, the priorities were poverty, education and training, violence against women and children (especially the girl-child) and inequality in power-sharing and decision-making at all levels.

28. Jamaica commended the work done by Governments and the United Nations to mainstream the gender perspective in follow-up programmes to the Conference, but was concerned about the tendency to use "gender" interchangeably with "women" when referring to matters relating solely to women. In that regard, the clarification of the term "gender" in document A/51/322 was much appreciated.

29. The issue of violence against women migrant workers needed further study, taking account of the factors outlined in the Secretary-General's report (A/51/325). Given its own multi-ethnic population and the large number of Jamaicans in the immigrant populations of the United States, Canada and Europe, Jamaica understood both sides of the issue and could exercise tolerance and understand different views.

30. Governments and the United Nations system must provide adequate financial and human resources for the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action; in addition to providing the necessary personnel, they must help create an appropriate working environment. There were many parts of the world where women were exploited and the international community had a difficult task ahead if it was to put an end to the situation.

31. Ms. CHOWDHURY (India) said that the Fourth World Conference on Women had offered a new perspective on women's issues, viewing them as an intrinsic part of and central to society as a whole, and had secured international consensus on

the advancement of women as a moral imperative. With regard to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, India commended the new working methods and the adoption of a multi-year programme of work by the Commission on the Status of Women. The United Nations system had responded seriously to the mandates of the Beijing Conference; however, India hoped to see greater gender sensitivity in the follow-up to the recent world conferences sponsored by the United Nations, integration of the gender perspective in analytical and operational activities and measures to increase the numbers of women in the Secretariat on the principle of equitable geographical distribution. Furthermore, the Division for the Advancement of Women and other related organizations dealing with women in the United Nations system must be adequately funded.

32. The Indian Government had worked, with the help of non-governmental organizations, to fulfil the commitments it had made at the Fourth World Conference on Women, by drafting a National Policy for the Empowerment of Women. That policy incorporated the gender perspective into all plans, policies, programmes, budgetary allocations, appraisals, monitoring and evaluatory exercises, so as to guide action and policy in every sector. The aim was to facilitate the advancement of women and guarantee their participation in the development and decision-making process on equal terms, through strategies of education and affirmative action.

33. Women were also being empowered at the political level through a combination of affirmative action, such as the establishment of quotas in legislative and decision-making bodies, and through strategies of education, self-help, advocacy and awareness raising. There were now nearly one million women holding positions of power and participating in decision-making at all levels - a direct consequence of the amendment of the Constitution in 1992. The Government had also tabled a bill, that received cross-party support, to reserve at least one third of seats for women in the national parliament and State Legislative Assemblies.

34. With regard to the issue of violence and discrimination against women, the National Commission for Women, with the help of the judiciary and non-governmental organizations, had introduced "People's Courts". Those courts had resolved nearly 7,000 cases in less than a year. A recommendation had been made for the appointment of special Commissioners to publicly defend women's rights, and the Government, in consultation with the National Commission for Women, was currently undertaking a review of all existing laws in order to remove provisions which discriminated against women, and to propose additional legislation to safeguard women's rights. Moreover, in keeping with its Beijing commitments, India remained committed to increasing budgetary expenditure on education to 6 per cent of GDP by the year 2000. The focus of elementary education would be the girl child and special attention would be given to areas with a high incidence of female illiteracy.

35. The problems of women and poverty could not be divorced from the wider economic environment or the problem of poverty eradication. The most effective strategies for poverty eradication would be those that focused on the crucial but often less visible role of women in the economy. In order to succeed those

strategies must address structural imbalances and their wider causes. Yet, neither the negotiations within the Commission on the Status of Women concerning resolutions on women and poverty, nor those within the Commission for Social Development concerning poverty eradication, nor practical action at the international level, had demonstrated the solidarity, good faith, political will or acknowledgement of collective responsibility required to resolve the problem. Successful implementation of the Platform for Action depended on the contribution of all the participants - Governments, civil society and international organizations - and while the primary responsibility for implementation lay at the national level, international cooperation was crucial, particularly with regard to fulfilling commitments to provide financial resources.

36. Mr. MAGHERU (Romania), speaking in support of the statement made by the delegation of Ireland on behalf of the European Union, said that the Beijing Conference was very important to the future of all women, since it presented a programme for the advancement of women and the achievement of equality between the sexes. The Conference had also underscored the role of women as agents of change and their contribution to the promotion of democratic values and the prosperity of society: it had been instrumental in ensuring that women's rights were viewed as an integral part of human rights and universal fundamental freedoms. In keeping with that new vision, the gender perspective should be incorporated into all national, regional and international policies and programmes.

37. Although Governments bore the main responsibility for implementing that and other recommendations in the Beijing Platform for Action, civil society and the international community had also to do their part. In that regard, Romania was pleased to note that the United Nations system was working to integrate issues relating to equality between men and women into its activities, and hoped that the Ad Hoc Inter-Agency Women's Group, established by the Administrative Committee on Coordination, would help to achieve cohesion in the follow-up activities to the world conferences, and seek to reconcile the political and operational aspects of United Nations activities so that the gender perspective would be an integral part of the entire system.

38. To fulfil a commitment made at the Beijing Conference, his Government, in cooperation with the Division for the Advancement of Women, the UNDP Regional Bureau for Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Economic Commission for Europe, had organized a subregional conference of government experts on the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in central and eastern Europe, which had been held in Bucharest from 12 to 14 September 1996. In accordance with the priorities of the Platform for Action and the specific needs of the countries with economies in transition, the Conference had considered three important topics: the elaboration of national strategies and plans of action for implementing the Beijing Programme, including the mobilization of resources and international cooperation; the identification of measures and mechanisms to encourage the institutional capacity of the relevant national structures; and the role of civil society in implementing the recommendations of the Conference. The Bucharest meeting had brought home the fact that the complex women's issues could not be tackled in a constructive and efficient manner unless joint efforts were made at the governmental, non-

governmental and international levels. The meeting had provided an opportunity for dialogue and exchange of opinions, helped to clarify the measures which the new democracies needed to take to promote the advancement of women, and emphasized the need to integrate the gender perspective into those countries' democratic processes.

39. The final document of the Bucharest meeting contained specific recommendations on organizing national consultative processes involving civil society with a view to elaborating and implementing national plans, integrating activities designed to strengthen national structures working for the advancement of women within the context of administrative reform, establishing cooperation mechanisms between governments and non-governmental organizations, and conducting research and gathering statistical data on the role of women in society. In addition, the conference had attached particular importance to cooperation between the United Nations, the specialized agencies and the Bretton Woods institutions. Accordingly, the participants had recommended that the Advisory Committee of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) should consider, at its 1997 session, the possibility of extending its activities to cover central and eastern Europe. An important result of the meeting had been the elaboration of a national action plan to implement the Platform for Action; countries in other regions could use the plan as a model.

40. Ms. TOMIC (Slovenia) welcomed the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General on the Implementation of the Outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women (A/51/322) and the measures taken by most intergovernmental bodies, secretariats and programmes of the United Nations to mainstream a gender perspective into their policies and programmes. However, further work was needed to incorporate a gender perspective in the day-to-day work of United Nations staff, for example by developing a methodology to apply a gender perspective in reporting under the terms of international human rights instruments and mechanisms. Her delegation viewed with interest the recommendations of the Expert Group of the Statistical Commission on the Statistical Implications of Recent Major United Nations Conferences, to the effect that sets of national social data disaggregated by sex should be prepared in order to measure progress in implementation of the programmes of action of the conferences. Her delegation also wished to stress the invaluable role of non-governmental organizations in monitoring the progress of implementation of conference recommendations.

41. With regard to the position of women in the United Nations Secretariat, her delegation believed it was important to continue to strive for achievement of the set targets for more equality between the sexes and for more equitable geographical distribution, despite the crisis facing the Organization. Her Government fully agreed with the relevant remarks in the report on improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat (A/51/304).

42. Although there was de jure equality between men and women in Slovenia, much needed to be done in order to achieve de facto equality. To raise public awareness about such issues, the Government of Slovenia had published the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in Slovene and had disseminated a

summary of the provisions of the Beijing document in schools, public institutions, and elsewhere.

43. As a State party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, Slovenia was aware of the problem posed by the backlog of reports awaiting review. It thus supported the decision taken by the States parties the previous year to amend article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention. However, since it was anticipated that the entry into force of that amendment would take some time, her Government supported the interim request by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women for two three-week sessions preceded by a one-week pre-session working group. The Convention was the basic legal framework for the human rights of women, which had been reaffirmed as an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the World Conference on Human Rights and the Fourth World Conference on Women. Her delegation was therefore pleased to note the growing number of States parties to the Convention and hoped that its universal ratification could be achieved by the year 2000. Slovenia supported moves for an optional protocol to the Convention which would provide the right to submit individual appeals in cases of violation of women's rights. Her Government thus supported the continuation of the work of the relevant working group during the forty-first session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

44. Her delegation attached particular importance to the issue of violence against women in all its forms and endorsed the statement in the report of the Secretary-General on violence against women migrant workers (A/51/325) that the work of the expert group on that issue at its meeting in May could be considered as a starting point for work on internationally agreed indicators for violence against women.

45. Ms. LOPES DA ROSA (Guinea-Bissau) said that, at the Fourth World Conference on Women, Governments and non-governmental organizations had acknowledged the relationship between social development and improving the economic and political status of women. One of the main concerns of the Conference had been to reverse the trend towards the feminization of poverty, thereby rescuing women from the vicious circle which was a flagrant violation of human rights and an affront to human dignity. However, it had to be admitted that the status of women had changed little, especially in Africa.

46. Her Government recognized that the principal agents in the fight against poverty were governments, but believed that the international community had a moral obligation to keep the promises which had been made at the Beijing Conference, particularly with regard to mobilizing new and additional resources and increasing international cooperation. In that regard, her Government, which in spite of budgetary constraints had always devoted special attention to the status of women, had taken innovative steps to incorporate the legitimate concerns of women into the country's development policies and programmes. Pursuant to the Beijing recommendations, her Government had organized seminars and courses in different areas to inform the public about the progress and the results of the conference. In addition, it had established an Executive Department in the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Promotion of Women to follow up on the conference. The Government of Guinea-Bissau was conscious of the need to encourage the role of women as both agents and beneficiaries of

development by ensuring that they had better access to education, health, employment, maternity and child-care services, as well as access to credit so that they could be fully integrated in the country's development. Consequently, the Government intended to implement a plan of action with the active collaboration and participation of all interested parties.

47. Her delegation welcomed the appointment of an Assistant Secretary-General and a Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues, and also the establishment of a Steering Committee to improve the status of women in the Secretariat, all of which reaffirmed the Secretary-General's desire to encourage the advancement of women. Her delegation also welcomed the measures taken by various bodies, secretariats and programmes throughout the United Nations system to fulfil the provisions of the Beijing Platform for Action. While acknowledging the valuable work done by bodies dedicated to the advancement of women such as the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) and UNIFEM, she believed it was important to provide them with political and financial support to enable them to carry out their mandates.

48. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women - which Guinea-Bissau had been among the first to sign and ratify - was still one of the most important legal instruments in the fight against discrimination. Her delegation therefore endorsed the decision by the Economic and Social Council to renew the mandate of the working group responsible for elaborating a draft optional protocol to the Convention. At meetings of the States parties to the Convention, her Government had supported the proposal to request the General Assembly to authorize the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women to meet twice a year with effect from 1997 in order to deal with the consideration backlog of reports. Her Government also endorsed the Committee's decision to request State parties to include in their reports information on the measures they had adopted to implement the Beijing Platform for Action.

49. Guinea-Bissau regretted that exploitation of women through international prostitution networks and trafficking in women and girls had become one of the major forms of international organized crime. Appropriate and urgent measures must be taken to punish offenders and prevent that phenomenon, which constituted a violation of women's rights and fundamental freedoms. In addition, countries must adopt new legislation and enforce existing laws, provide information and education, and allow for the rehabilitation and reintegration of those women into society. Furthermore, since international cooperation would have to be strengthened, as the Secretary-General had stated in his report (A/51/309), the Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others of 1949, to which fewer than half of the Member States were party, should be revised and a new body established with responsibility for examining reports on the implementation of that Convention, in order to make it more effective.

50. As for the status of women in the Secretariat, efforts must be continued to increase women's representation at all levels, including in the highest grades.

51. Everything possible must be done to achieve the goals set in Beijing, and the United Nations system must play a leading role in establishing a climate favourable to increased cooperation and participation by countries so that obstacles to the advancement of women could be overcome. The necessary financial and human resources must be allocated and priority must be given to activities in that field; steps should also be taken to limit the impact of the Organization's financial crisis on programmes for the advancement of women.

52. Mr. TESSEMA (Ethiopia) said that his delegation believed that the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women (A/51/322) provided guidelines for measures to be taken by the United Nations, Governments and non-governmental organizations. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action stipulated that Governments had primary responsibility for the implementation of the commitments made at the Conference, and must take a leading role in coordinating, monitoring and assessing progress in the advancement of women. Since the demise of the military dictatorship five years earlier, the Ethiopian Government had taken measures to pave the way for the advancement of women. For example, the new Constitution guaranteed women equal rights; it had established a Women's Affairs Office, promulgated a national policy on women and incorporated gender issues into national education, health and population policies. Thus, the Fourth World Conference on Women had been a catalyst to national efforts for the advancement of women, and had also provided an opportunity to examine further the problems of Ethiopian women, share experiences and forge links of cooperation with the international community. With the goal of implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Government was devising a national plan of action as part of its development strategy under the guidance of the Women's Affairs Office.

53. A year after the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the spirit of Beijing had encouraged the Ethiopian Government to enhance its activities for the advancement of women. In the political sphere, the election of a new Government had provided women with an opportunity to elect representatives who would promote their empowerment in the economic and political fields, and to serve in high offices in the Government. While the political empowerment of women remained a challenge for the Government, an encouraging start had been made, indicating that attitudes towards women's leadership capabilities were changing. In the economic sphere, the new Government had adopted a five-year programme of development centred on agricultural development. The new Constitution guaranteed to women the right to own land and access to credit, as well as other services, on an equal basis with men.

54. Another prime objective of the five-year development programme was the provision of primary health care services and education, for which purpose health centres and schools were being built in rural areas. The goal was to reduce maternal and infant mortality rates, increase the enrollment of girls at all educational levels and decrease the high dropout rate for girls.

55. In the light of the measures undertaken in ethiopia in the political, economic and social spheres to meet the commitments made at the Beijing Conference, it could be concluded that the advancement of women was on the right

track. The responsibility of Governments for the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action should not, however, be overemphasized, especially with regard to a least developed country like Ethiopia, since implementation depended on assistance from and cooperation with the international community. Financial, material and technical assistance complemented by a favourable international economic environment was imperative for the realization of the strategic objectives set out in Beijing.

56. Mr. GUBAREVICH (Belarus) said that the importance of the Fourth World Conference on Women lay in the fact that not only had it established a strategy and tactics for improving the status of women over the forthcoming decade, but it had also proposed a specific mechanism for monitoring the fulfilment of its objectives. It was essential, therefore, that national activities should be reinforced by coordinated measures at the system-wide level.

57. Regrettably, the far-reaching socio-economic changes taking place in Belarus had been accompanied by negative effects, including a decline in production, price increases, inflation, a drop in real income and a lower standard of living, all of which was compounded by the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster. The number of women living in poverty had increased due, in part, to the rigid social stereotypes regarding sex roles and the limitations imposed on women's access to power. Despite the economic crisis, measures had been taken to improve living conditions for women and children, including some laws providing protection for mothers and children as well as single mothers and mothers of large families.

58. On the basis of the documents from the Beijing Conference, mechanisms had been established to develop, coordinate and execute policy to improve the status of women in all spheres, and an attempt was being made to adapt national legislation to corresponding international norms. In June 1996, the Belarus Council of Ministers had approved the National Plan of Action 1996-2000 to improve the status of women. Furthermore, in accordance with the law on subsidies to families with children, subsidies would be granted to women during pregnancy, childbirth and while caring for children up to age 3. Various benefits were also planned for mothers raising disabled children, along with other social protection measures.

59. Belarus, a country with an economy in transition, was not in a position to resolve the social problems it faced without assistance from the international community. In that respect, it was grateful for the assistance provided by international organizations, particularly the Office of the United Nations Development Programme in Minsk. As a result of its cooperation, the Centre for Gender Information and Policy had been established within the Ministry of Social Welfare, with responsibility for developing and implementing gender policy in the country. The Centre maintained close cooperation with UNICEF. With assistance from the regional office for Europe of the World Health Organization, work was being completed on a national programme for maternal and child health. Belarus was taking part in the execution of the WHO project on investment in women's health and the UNDP project on women in development.

60. His delegation believed that the fortieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women had made a major contribution to the implementation of decisions made in Beijing. The results of that session were proving extremely useful, and his delegation considered that the Commission should act as a coordinating mechanism for the implementation of the decisions made at the Beijing Conference. He also supported the holding of discussions between interested delegations and the group of experts during the Commission's sessions. Account should be taken of the principle of equitable geographical distribution in the selection of experts, and greater advantage should be taken of the opportunities which the Commission now had to elaborate new ways and methods for the organization of its work. Also, the restructuring of the Commission should continue to take place within the limits of the approved budget.

61. His delegation welcomed the adoption by the Commission of the resolution on poverty, which recognized the need to continue efforts of cooperation and international support for national activities to implement the Platform for Action in countries with economies in transition. The time had come for the United nations specialized agencies to pay attention to the practical implementation of the provisions of the texts which had been adopted at various international forums concerning aid to countries with economies in transition.

62. Finally, his delegation believed that violence against women was one of the most serious problems of the present times and it supported the establishment of a database on violence against women that would collect not only published information but also documents of a restricted nature.

63. Ms. WAHBI (Sudan) said that her Government based all its policies on the principle of justice, and women's issues were no exception to the rule. Ignorance of moral values and disrespect for certain religious beliefs, cultures and civilizations added to the pressure brought to bear on countries to change their national character; it had also affected the situation of women and caused conflicts which sometimes resulted in women losing some of the rights which they had had for centuries in certain traditional societies. Her delegation therefore asked the international community to put a stop to that phenomenon, which could only lead to a weakening of society and of the situation of women in society.

64. Since employment legislation guaranteed women equal rights in all respects, Sudanese women held elected positions in the Legislative Assembly and other posts at various levels in Government, centres of higher education, ministries, the police and the army. They also contributed, as professionals and researchers, to economic development in industry and services. A law had recently been promulgated establishing family care centres. The economic independence of women was also guaranteed by the Constitution. Women had access to banking services and to credit for housing and other purposes. In 1996 a law had been promulgated protecting women's rights to land ownership. The right to education was not in question. Sixty per cent of university students were women.

65. Also, the aim of health care services was not only to protect the population against disease, but also to establish an inner balance to ensure mental and physical health. Religion and traditions helped to prevent evils

suffered by other societies. Efforts were being made to protect women against violence, a phenomenon which occurred only in exceptional circumstances in Sudanese society, since both society and the law rejected it totally.

66. As for the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, her Government had established concrete goals to eliminate obstacles which could impede the advancement of women. However, much remained to be done before the commitments entered into could be considered to have been fulfilled. The lack of resources within the United Nations system had made it more difficult to implement the Platform. At the international level, despite the wish expressed by many States to implement the Platform for Action, economic difficulties and scarce resources had been the main obstacles in the way of the fulfilment of those commitments.

67. States should enter into commitments both individually and collectively under the auspices of the United Nations, to provide the necessary resources for the implementation of the Platform for Action. Also, she reiterated the request which had been made to the Secretary-General to do everything in his power to obtain the resources needed so that countries could put the Platform for Action into practice. Many voluntary mechanisms had been established in the Sudan to realize activities to promote the advancement of women. At the Government level, units had been created to promote the role of women and protect their right to work.

68. Pursuant to the Beijing Platform, her Government had focused on the priorities relating to eradication of poverty among women, the provision of special care to refugee women, girl children and the sharing of responsibilities in the home. A committee had been established, made up of university professors, deputies and representatives of non-governmental organizations, projects dealing with the priorities established in the Platform for Action had been drawn up and activities relating to women in development were being coordinated. On that last subject, practical training courses had been organized. Priority had been given to women in the media in order to promote knowledge about women and their role in society. Emphasis had been placed on the particular situation of working women, a condition accepted by religion and respected by Sudanese society.

69. Her Government intended to implement the Platform for Action in such a way as to enable women to enjoy all their rights and to make it possible to fulfil completely the commitments entered into regarding the advancement of women and the promotion of their role in society.

70. Ms. PRADA de MESA (International Labour Organisation) said that the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action had identified women's employment as central to the achievement of equality of opportunity and treatment and to the eradication of poverty. Accordingly,the advancement of women was among the highest priority areas for the technical cooperation and research activities and policy advisory services of the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

71. Since the 1980s, women had been providing the bulk of all new labour supply, even in male-dominated occupations. That expansion, however, was due to

gender segregation within the labour market and the fact that women accepted non-standard forms of work, low-paid and low-skilled jobs or part-time employment. While more women were working, the great majority of them were simply swelling the ranks of the working poor, a situation exacerbated by the increasing number of female-headed households.

72. After giving statistical data on the subject, she mentioned some of the forms of discrimination that women faced when accessing the job market, including unequal access to training and retraining and to credit and other productive resources, and low participation in economic decision-making and in collective bargaining structures.

73. The new international programme of technical cooperation "More and Better Jobs for Women", the aim of which was to promote employment in conditions of equality, constituted the specific response of the ILO to the call of Beijing to the United Nations agencies. In preparing for that programme, ILO had issued a publication with the same title, analyzing current employment opportunities for women and the challenges facing them. The programme had been prepared in close cooperation with other United Nations agencies and the Bretton Woods institutions.

74. The programme would address, in a multidisciplinary way, the various social and economic factors that put women entering the labour force in a disadvantaged position and would emphasize a participatory approach to the formulation and implementation of all activities. In order to provide more jobs for women, the programme would take into account the many components involved in promoting equal opportunities for access to the labour market, including the creation of productive and remunerative employment opportunities that were equally accessible to women and men, the promotion of education and training for women and girls so as to enhance their recruitment, career and employment prospects, the development of entrepreneurship and improved access to productive resources so that women could become self-employed or set up their own business. Emphasis would also be placed on the enactment of legislation to promote gender equality in access to jobs.

75. In addition, ILO would draw upon its labour standards and activities to address the qualitative aspect of the problem, namely, equal pay for work of equal value; improved occupational safety and health measures; family-friendly workplaces; better employment security and working conditions for those in part-time or atypical forms of employment; social security provisions, including maternity protection; social protection for vulnerable or marginalized groups of women workers; and an end to job segregation. The mix of those components would differ from country to country and, at the invitation of the countries, ILO would strive to ensure that each national programme was tailored to country- or group-specific priorities, circumstances and needs so that the staff and experts of ILO could work closely with Government officials, employers' and workers' organizations and other representatives of civil society to define and prioritize objectives, secure financial and human resources, and plan and implement activities.

76. In short, only by working together could countries and agencies succeed in changing the course of gender equality and the role of women in the economy and in society.

77. Mr. GURMAN (United Nations Development Programme) said that, while the balance sheet for the work of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in the period after the Fourth World Conference on Women was positive, much more remained to be done. The recent decisions taken by the senior management of UNDP would significantly increase the commitment of the Programme to the advancement of women and to gender equality. Through the Resident Coordinator system, UNDP was facilitating a joint response by the United Nations system to plans of action for the follow-up to the Beijing Conference, as evidenced by the recently concluded first meeting of the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC).

78. UNDP and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) were formulating strategies to improve the coordination of the response by the United Nations system at the national level to the follow-up to the Beijing Conference. UNDP had targeted ten countries to facilitate national consensus-building on policies, programmes and coordination. The new country strategy notes, UNDP advisory notes and national human development reports increasingly addressed gender gaps and supported gender-disaggregated human development indicators on capabilities and access to resources and opportunities. In addition, proposed programming interventions addressed the advancement of women and gender equality as issues that were linked strategically to poverty eradication and sustainable livelihoods, regeneration of the environment and good governance.

79. In Tanzania, UNDP had a model policy in place which incorporated a gender perspective into all programme formulation, implementation and evaluation processes. In Guatemala, it was facilitating a national action platform for the advancement of women and gender equity within the framework of the Peace Agreements and poverty eradication programmes. In Europe and in the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Programme was focusing on strengthening capacities for gender mainstreaming and on the dialogue between non-governmental organizations and Governments within the context of economic and political transition. In Asia, UNDP, with the support of the Government of Japan, was facilitating the exchange of technical cooperation among developing countries in the field of economic empowerment of women. There still remained, however, a substantial gap between the goals achieved and the objectives set. Moreover, financial allocations were insufficient to substantively support a gender-focused sustainable human development framework at the global, regional and national levels.

80. UNDP had taken a number of measures to address that gap. Its senior management had made a commitment to significantly increase financial resource allocations for the advancement of women through the global programme and the respective regional programmes. That would take place both through gender mainstreaming as a cross-cutting theme and through programmes targeted to women. The respective regional programmes and the global programme would strengthen the capacities of programme countries to implement methodologies and tools for gender mainstreaming and would provide support for the development of models and

good practices. At the country level, a high level of commitment by Resident Representatives was essential to the achievement of that objective. The Administrator of UNDP was challenging the Resident Representatives to increase, in consultation with Governments, UNDP resource allocations for the advancement of women and to ensure that gender dimensions were addressed in all programmes. The Directors of Regional Bureaux had been requested to consider gender mainstreaming, gender equality and the advancement of women as a quality indicator for programme country access to additional resources.

81. In order to increase capacity for gender analysis and gender mainstreaming, the Gender in Development Programme had developed innovative training and learning workshops at the regional and subregional levels. In the approximately 20 countries of experimentation, the Gender in Development Programme would conclude an assessment of the best practices and the lessons learnt in the field of gender mainstreaming in order to provide guidance for policy and programme development over the following three years.

82. The goal of gender equality, from a programme and institutional perspective, was the collective responsibility of all of UNDP, led by senior management and guided, monitored and assessed by the Gender in Development Programme. Promoting the implementation of the targets set in the gender balance policy of UNDP was an integral part of the human resources strategy and change management process of UNDP.

83. Some progress had been made during the previous two years in the pursuit of gender balance, particularly at senior management levels. The number of women Resident Representatives had increased during that period from 16 to 21 and the number of Deputy Resident Representatives from 27 to 32. In summary, while more needed to be done to ensure that the actions of UNDP on behalf of women were consistent with its advocacy messages, the Programme was clearly on the right track in mainstreaming the gender perspective into the framework of sustainable human development.

84. Mr. AL-HITTI (Iraq), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that, in its comments on the topic under consideration, Kuwait had referred to the suffering of Kuwaiti women because of the alleged detention of Kuwaiti men by Iraq. That situation had nothing to do with the subject under discussion. Iraq, moreover, had no prisoners of war of any nationality. While some persons had indeed disappeared, Iraq, in collaboration with the International Committee of the Red Cross and with the Government of Kuwait itself, had attempted to locate them.

85. Iraq was of the view that Kuwait would provide a worthy service to the women of that country if it called upon its Government to eliminate discrimination against Kuwaiti women, who were not even allowed to vote in parliamentary and other types of elections. Instead of making accusations against Iraq to tarnish its image and prolong the unjust blockade, Kuwait should eliminate the discrimination against women that was perpetuated in the Constitution of that State.

The meeting rose at 5.15 p.m.

UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FIFTY-FIRST SESSION

Official Records

THIRD COMMITTEE
17th meeting
held on
Tuesday, 29 October 1996
at 3 p.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 17th MEETING

Chairman:	Mrs. ESPINOSA	(Mexico)
later:	Mr. KHAN (Vice-Chairman)	(Pakistan)
later:	Mrs. ESPINOSA (Chairman)	(Mexico)

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 101: CRIME PREVENTION AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 103: ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 104: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OUTCOME OF THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN (continued)

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of the publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-794, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

Distr. GENERAL
A/C.3/51/SR.17
4 September 1997

ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: SPANISH

96-81695 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 101: CRIME PREVENTION AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE (continued) (A/C.3/51/L.6)

Draft resolution A/C.3/51/L.6

1. Mr. NDIKUMANA (Burundi) introduced the draft resolution entitled "United Nations African Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders". Its main objective was to reaffirm the need for the United Nations to continue to support the existence and operation of that institution, especially its human resource development programmes. Because of the organized and transnational nature of crime in the majority of African countries, individual Governments could not combat it alone; a regional and global approach was needed. The draft resolution had changed only slightly from the previous resolution, and its sponsors hoped it could be adopted by consensus. Paragraph 3 had been revised to read:

> "3. Requests the Secretary-General to intensify efforts and mobilize all relevant entities of the United Nations system to provide necessary financial and technical support to the Institute to enable it to fulfil its mandate;".

A new paragraph 5 had been added, which read:

> "5. Further requests the Secretary-General to enhance regional cooperation, coordination and collaboration in the fight against crime, especially in its transnational dimensions, which could not be adequately dealt with by national action alone;".

Finally, the words "intergovernmental and" had been deleted from paragraph 6, which, as revised, read: "Appeals to all Member States and non-governmental organizations...".

AGENDA ITEM 103: ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN (continued) (A/51/3 (Parts I and II), A/51/38, A/51/90, A/51/180, A/51/210, A/51/277 and Corr.1, A/51/304 and Corr.1, A/51/309, A/51/325, A/51/391 and A/50/509 and Add.1)

AGENDA ITEM 104: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OUTCOME OF THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN (continued) (A/51/90, A/51/210 and A/51/322)

2. Ms. TARR-WHELAN (United States of America) said that, in order to achieve the objectives of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the United Nations should focus first on mainstreaming a gender perspective in its activities, a process which had already successfully begun. The continued advancement of women in the United Nations system was of critical importance. The United States of America supported the goal of gender equality in the United Nations by the year 2000 and encouraged the Secretary-General to appoint more women as special representatives in preventive diplomacy and peacekeeping missions.

3. Since Governments had committed themselves at recent United Nations conferences and summits to the empowerment of women in different areas, coordination at the operational and policy levels was crucial to enable all United Nations bodies to participate in that task. The Subregional Conference of Senior Governmental Experts held in Bucharest, which the United States had attended as an observer, was an example of positive and successful collaboration and a model for Member States and non-governmental organizations in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action.

4. The United Nations should monitor the implementation of the Platform for Action, primarily through the Commission on the Status of Women, which, at its 1996 session, had maintained a fruitful dialogue with the panel of experts and Member States. Member States should include in their delegation experts who could speak with authority on women's issues and who could implement changes once they returned home. In that way, the Commission could inform delegations on practical ways to implement the Beijing Platform. The work of the Commission on the Status of Women and of the General Assembly could be strengthened by consolidating resolutions and focusing efforts on ways to help the United Nations and Member States to implement the commitments assumed in Beijing, on critical areas of concern, and on emerging issues and trends affecting the situation of women, particularly those requiring urgent consideration.

5. Although it had been affirmed at the Beijing Conference that women's rights were human rights, in Afghanistan women were being kept out of the workplace and young girls out of school, which was unacceptable from a moral, economic and political viewpoint. In addition to violating women's human rights, such a policy was self-defeating since without women a modern economy could not function and it would be impossible to rebuild the country after a decade of war. The United States supported the Secretary-General's efforts to carry out relief programmes in Afghanistan. Policies restricting the rights of women and girls must not be tolerated, and if that situation continued, it would have an effect on the ability of the international community to grant loans and give assistance.

6. The United States was serious about the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, not only globally but nationally as well. In order to facilitate mainstreaming, coordination and monitoring, President Clinton had established the Interagency Council on Women on the eve of the Beijing Conference chaired by Secretary of Health and Human Services Donna Shalala, with First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton serving as Honorary Chair. The Council members, who were high-level representatives from all Government agencies, were developing policies for the advancement of women and girls and sought to mainstream them into the mission, policies and programmes of their agencies. At the community level, they also coordinated the efforts of law enforcement workers, judicial officials, service providers, advocates and non-governmental organizations to design programmes to combat violence against women.

7. As the mechanism for implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, the Interagency Council was also involved in public education and outreach. On 28 September 1996, the Council had sponsored a national conference via satellite to report on progress made at the local and non-governmental levels and to develop an agenda of priorities for future action. Currently, the Interagency Council

was analyzing the reports and recommendations that had come out of that event, as it prepared the national agenda for implementation and a report on Government measures to improve the lives of women and girls. With regard to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Administration supported ratification, which was still pending, but the Senate had not yet given its consent. The United States would continue to make its contribution in the drafting of the optional protocol.

8. Mr. AL-HITTI (Iraq) said that the Constitution and certain laws in Iraq guaranteed that women's legal and social status would be equal to that of men. Iraq had acceded to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and had adopted mechanisms and programmes designed to promote the advancement of women at the national level on the basis of the provisions of the Nairobi Conference and the Beijing Platform for Action. Among those measures, he highlighted the establishment of a National Committee to promote the advancement of women through action by those ministries that allocated a portion of their resources for that purpose. The Ministry of Health had opened maternal-child health care centres; the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Social Affairs had opened day-care centres; and the Ministry of Higher Education had established universities for women in adverse social conditions. Various men's organizations and a number of trade unions had made a commitment to work for the advancement of women. The Women's Federation of Iraq, the country's largest non-governmental organization devoted to women's issues, focused on programmes for the advancement of women in the social, cultural and economic spheres. As a result, new employment opportunities for women had been created and laws guaranteeing their rights at various levels had been promulgated. As regards political participation, 20 women had been elected to the Iraqi National Council in the most recent elections.

9. Those measures, which Iraq had begun adopting even prior to the 1980s, had been impeded by the unfair embargo maintained despite the fact that any reasons that might have justified it no longer existed. The impact of the embargo on the most vulnerable sectors of the population (women, children and elderly persons) was a near disaster. The worst problem confronting those groups was the scarcity of medicines and food. According to reports of the United Nations specialized agencies, such as UNICEF and FAO, and of various human rights organizations, more than 500,000 Iraqi children had died as a result of the embargo, not to mention the millions of Iraqis who suffered from hunger and disease. The UNICEF reports indicated that 4,500 Iraqi children under five years of age died every month. Those figures were higher than those for the victims of the Hiroshima nuclear holocaust, which proved that the economic embargo had become a weapon of mass destruction that was in no way justifiable. UNICEF had also indicated that 3 million Iraqi women and children were in serious danger of malnutrition and lacked medicines. That was borne out by a press release of the World Food Programme, which also stated that it would take many generations to repair the damage caused by the scarcity of food and medicines. According to the Director of the Programme, 4 million persons in Iraq were exposed to malnutrition, including 2.5 million children under five years of age, and many pregnant women and elderly persons did not receive the necessary care.

10. The embargo against Iraq was contrary to the provisions of the Platform for Action and other international instruments, because it impeded the country's economic and social development. Moreover, the use of medicines and food as a means of political pressure aggravated the situation of Iraqi women and children. For all those reasons, Iraq strongly condemned the embargo, which caused hunger among the Iraqi people under the guise of legitimacy, and requested the United Nations to investigate the situation of women and children in other countries affected by embargoes so that they might raise their voices and make their misfortune known.

11. Ms. FRITSCHE (Liechtenstein) said that her Government had begun to implement the Platform for Action for the advancement of women. In Liechtenstein, non-governmental organizations would continue to play a critical role in that process, which would focus, in particular, on motivating women to participate in national political life; providing academic and vocational guidance for adolescent girls; facilitating the compatibility of women's professional and family life, and building public awareness about the problem of violence against women and children.

12. Liechtenstein believed that the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was an indispensable tool for ensuring that all women had an opportunity to enjoy their human rights. Accordingly, it urged all States that had not yet done so to ratify or accede to the Convention in order to achieve universal ratification by the year 2000. Concerning the large number of reservations made to the Convention, she said that Liechtenstein had withdrawn its reservation to article 9 (2) of the Convention, as it had already amended its national legislation in order to ensure that women had the same rights as men with regard to the nationality of their children.

13. Her delegation commended the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women for its valuable contribution to the implementation of the provisions of the Convention and, in particular, for its efforts to amend its reporting guidelines so that the reports would focus more fully on the aspects of greatest interest in the States parties concerned. It also welcomed the ongoing efforts to elaborate an optional protocol to the Convention.

14. Women could and should play a more important role in conflict resolution, because they made a tremendous contribution to the preservation of social order in times of war and armed conflict. Her delegation would therefore welcome the appointment of a greater number of women as special representatives of the Secretary-General. It was pleased to note that the delegations and the Secretary-General attached great importance to the role of women in preventive diplomacy, and it supported the establishment of a roster of competent women who could become special representatives or heads of mission.

15. With regard to the report of the Secretary-General on the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat (A/51/304), her delegation regretted that much remained to be done in order to ensure that women filled 50 per cent of posts by the year 2000; it was equally regrettable that the target of women in 25 per cent of the senior posts had not been achieved by 1995. Nevertheless, her delegation did not agree with the proposal to revise the goals set by the General Assembly concerning the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat and believed that efforts should be enhanced to recruit and promote

women, particularly at the senior level, and to improve the situation of women in the Secretariat in general through training and other means that would promote gender balance. It also welcomed the creation of the task force on the question of sexual harassment. Lastly, her delegation believed that the recommendations contained in the report on traffic in women and girls (A/51/309) and the report on violence against women migrant workers (A/51/325) should be carefully considered by the Third Committee, other intergovernmental bodies and interested individuals.

16. Mrs. WADIBIA-ANYANWU (Nigeria) welcomed the fact that 153 countries had ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and hoped that Member States would withdraw many of the reservations they had made.

17. She expressed support for the work of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the methods proposed for enhancing its effectiveness and reducing the huge backlog of reports to be considered. Accordingly, her delegation hoped that more time would be allocated for the Committee's sessions and that it would be provided with the resources necessary to carry out its work. Her delegation also supported the method adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women, which consisted in inviting experts from Governments and non-governmental organizations to exchange views on critical women's issues; however, experts from all regions must be invited.

18. Her delegation hailed the work carried out by the Consultative Committee of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) in promoting the participation of women in the political and social spheres and the Fund's participation in various programmes on gender issues. It hoped that a trust fund would be established to strengthen UNIFEM activities to combat violence against women and that contributions to it would be generous. While it appreciated the progress achieved in improving the status of women in the Secretariat, her delegation believed that the United Nations should continue to make every effort to meet the targets set in Beijing. It therefore supported the elaboration of a database on highly qualified women from all regions.

19. Nigeria had participated in the expert group meeting on violence against women migrant workers, convened under General Assembly resolution 50/168. At that meeting, several problems faced by women migrant workers had been considered. Specific proposals and indicators, which would form the basis for future discussions, had been presented. At the same time, Nigeria identified with the international concern over the problem of trafficking in women and girls for sexual exploitation, which was part of the economic exploitation of the most vulnerable members of society. In that connection, it noted the importance of the work of the Working Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery of the Subcommission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities and supported all the strategies formulated to prevent that practice.

20. Concerning the Beijing Platform for Action, it was gratifying to note the efforts to help women in the areas of poverty, illiteracy and malnutrition eradication, improvement in health services, actions against violence and creation of credit facilities and access to productive work, and to increase the number of women in decision-making positions. Measures were being taken to

ensure the recognition of gender perspective in all the operations of the United Nations system; the streamlining of the activities of all the agencies, and the clear definition of relationships among all United Nations funds, the Focal Point for Women, the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues to the Secretary-General and the Division for the Advancement of Women would enhance effective implementation of the Platform. Nonetheless, Member States would have to provide new and additional resources if it was to be implemented in full.

21. Nigeria, which was committed to the full implementation of the Platform for Action taking into consideration its culture and resources, had worked out strategies to achieve its objectives and had given special attention to collaboration with non-governmental organizations and between the public and private sectors. Emphasis had been placed on the mobilization of women at all levels, and the raising of awareness in the community on the national advantages of mainstreaming and of the economic empowerment of women. While Nigeria had taken appropriate action, it would appreciate increased international cooperation to further facilitate the advancement of women in all spheres of life.

22. Ms. EL KABBAJ (Morocco) said that, at a time of far-reaching change throughout the world, women aspired to a better social order based on equality, justice and association. In implementing the Beijing Platform for Action, societies would have to improve the situation of women and ensure equality between the sexes. States must have the political will to demolish barriers to the emancipation of women, such as denial of the right to inherit property and administer assets, wages that were lower than men's, effective exclusion from decision-making, customary law that remained largely unaffected by positive law, ignorance and stereotyping. Democracy could not flourish in the absence of the participation of women, whose demands had to be taken into account.

23. In Africa, there were grounds for serious concern about the situation of women, characterized as it was by poverty, malnutrition, illiteracy, disease and heavy labour. Besides existing forms of inequality, African women had to cope with the inequitable social costs of the budget restrictions adopted by most African countries in response to the problem of debt and inflation. Consequently, the human development index for African women stood at only one third of the corresponding value for men.

24. It was regrettable that development organizations had cut their aid to Africa; the commitments made at Beijing would never be fulfilled at that rate. In that connection, it was to be hoped that States committed to the 20:20 initiative would pay particular attention to the special problems of women in developing countries, especially in Africa, and that international financial institutions would devote part of their assistance to improving the status of women. UNIFEM had already done much admirable work to better the lot of women in the developing countries by providing food, facilitating access to credit and making social services available.

25. Ms. SAVCHENKO (Ukraine) said that, in the light of the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the outcome of the Beijing Conference (A/51/322), it appeared that, in the intervening period, greater attention had been devoted to gender issues within the United Nations system and at the national and international levels. The work accomplished by non-governmental

organizations in implementing the decisions of the Conference was particularly noteworthy. In that connection, excellent results had also been achieved at the Subregional Conference of Senior Governmental Experts on the Implementation of the Platform for Action adopted by the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, in central and eastern Europe, which had been held in Bucharest, Romania, in September 1996. A number of important recommendations, relating to national strategies for implementation of the decisions of the Beijing Conference in countries with economies in transition, had been adopted at Bucharest.

26. The information presented in the report of the Secretary-General on traffic in women and girls (A/51/309) afforded grounds for the gravest concern. The recommendations relating to the conclusion contained in paragraph 55, on unsatisfactory aspects of the current reporting process, were reasonable and constituted a basis for future work in that area. Nonetheless, better statistical data were a necessary prerequisite to a more accurate picture of the social evils in question, as it was essential for official statistics to reflect reality. It appeared from the Secretary-General's report that poverty and unemployment were the main causes of the problem, which was multifaced. Its solution would require not only legislation but an in-depth reconsideration of the very concept of development. In that connection, the World Congress against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, held in Stockholm in August 1996, had been particularly noteworthy, as it had brought the united strength of the international community to bear on the task of eliminating a monstrous and shameful activity.

27. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women had considered the third periodic report of Ukraine on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and most of its recommendations were undeniably constructive. However, the delegation of Ukraine categorically rejected the contents of paragraphs 281 and 282 of the Committee's report (A/51/38), in which the Government of Ukraine was said to have made no effort to combat cultural and social stereotypes of women and men and to have no clearly formulated policy on women; furthermore, the national machinery for gender issues was described as ineffectual.

28. In fact, Ukraine was paying particular attention to women and their role in society. For instance, there were 6.7 million Ukrainian women with post-secondary education (compared to 5.3 million men), and 9.8 million women with secondary-level education (compared to 10.2 million men). Even so, it was important to bear in mind that the status of women had been adversely affected by the difficulties arising from economic reform and changes in social relations, the terrible impact of the Chernobyl disaster on the health of the population, and the fact that the death rate was higher than the birth rate. Another noteworthy fact was that the country was inhabited by over 130 nationalities and ethnic groups, and that Tartars, Germans and Greeks, who had been unjustly subjected to reprisals in the time of the former Soviet Union, were currently returning to Crimea.

29. In June 1996, the Government had created a Ministry of the Family and Youth. The functions of the new Ministry, which was headed by a woman, were to study the status of women, protect the interests of the family and children, and

work to improve the demographic situation, family planning and other issues of general interest. In order to achieve in Ukraine the objectives of the Fourth World Conference on Women, two programmes entitled "Family planning" and "Children of Ukraine" had been approved. The new Constitution, which had been promulgated on 28 June, expressly declared that men and women were equal in political, social and cultural life and enjoyed the same rights to education, employment, and equal pay. The establishment, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 50/203, of machinery to monitor the implementation of the decisions of the Beijing Conference was entirely justifiable. Accordingly, the most immediately essential task was effectively to implement the recommendations and commitments undertaken by Governments and international organizations.

30. Mrs. PATEL (Malawi) said that her delegation endorsed the statement made by the representative of Zambia on behalf of the South African Development Community (SADC). One of her Government's main objectives was to improve the status of women, with the long-term goal of achieving equality between men and women. Her Government recognized that women were a major resource in achieving sustainable development and so, even before the Fourth World Conference on Women, it had initiated a number of programmes to promote the advancement of women and improve the situation of the girl child.

31. Recognizing that one of the factors which hindered the advancement of women most was reproductive health, the Ministry of Women's and Children's Affairs, Community Development and Social Welfare had organized seminars to sensitize the public authorities on the subject and on the way in which those issues affected economic and social development in general. Furthermore, her Government intended to change the name of the National Family Welfare Council to the National Family Planning Council in an effort to establish a policy in that area.

32. In 1995 Malawi had introduced free primary education. Various measures were being taken to enable girls to complete their studies and projects were being implemented in cooperation with international bodies for the purpose of encouraging girls to stay in school, in spite of societal pressures to drop out of school to enter into early marriages, and combating certain cultural practices and truancy. Since 52 per cent of Malawi's population were women, Malawi believed that women must be economically empowered, and that their access to credit facilities must be ensured. To that end, several women's non-governmental organizations had been established such as the National Association of Business Women in Malawi and Women's World Banking, which, inter alia, acted as financial guarantors to big money-lending institutions.

33. Malawi's Constitution guaranteed gender equality. By 1997, amendments would be made to the laws on marriage, affiliation, wills and inheritance and other laws that directly affected women. Through those amendments, the Government, the judiciary and the traditional authorities would be able to impose penalties in cases of domestic violence, rape and non-fulfilment of parental obligations. Great strides had been made in including women in decision-making, as demonstrated by the appointment of two female Cabinet Ministers and two female Deputy Ministers. In addition, for the first time in Malawi's history, there were women heading major public corporations. Women also held senior and middle-level management positions in the public and private

sectors and, for the first time, were members of the diplomatic service. The situation could be improved, however.

34. The Beijing Platform for Action was being implemented in Malawi through three strategies, namely: sensitizing existing institutions and programmes so that the provisions of the Platform for Action could be incorporated in their activities; applying a sectoral approach so that government departments and non-governmental organizations would take up tasks relating to women in their areas of competence; and drafting the Malawi Platform of Action which had identified four of the twelve priorities recommended at Beijing: peace, violence against women, the girl child and empowerment. Malawi intended to develop specific objectives and activities in order to operationalize those areas. A monitoring mechanism for implementation would also be put in place.

35. Mechanisms had been set up in Malawi to promote the interests of women in various bodies and a process was in motion to establish a national commission on women in development, for which her Government had allocated funds in the 1996-1997 budget. A task force had been set up to review the common issues from recent world conferences such as the World Summit on Social Development, the International Conference on Population and Development and the Fourth World Conference on Women, and to develop strategies on a coordinated approach in implementing the outcomes of those conferences. A gender-sensitive policy framework was being developed.

36. All that had been achieved despite the lack of resources, the shortage of skilled personnel and the absence of machinery specifically responsible for women's issues to coordinate women's and gender issues, as well as many other operational problems. Her Government hoped that the women of Malawi would take up the challenge made at the Fourth World Conference and it sought moral support from intergovernmental bodies and the United Nations specialized agencies in that effort.

37. Mrs. MSUYA (United Republic of Tanzania), referring to the report on the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat (A/51/304), said that it was disappointing that the United Nations had not been able to achieve the target of 50/50 gender distribution in the Secretariat; her Government hoped that ways and means would be found to ensure that financial constraints did not impede the attainment of the targets which had been fixed. It was particularly discouraging that the financial constraints facing the United Nations were mainly affecting women, particularly women from Africa, especially since, at the current time, the number of African women in the Secretariat was minimal. The resolution on the question insisted on the need to respect the principle of equitable geographical distribution, and it was to be hoped that that recommendation would be implemented.

38. At the fiftieth session, her delegation had raised the issue of the need to establish a focal point within the United Nations system for the coordination of gender issues which would not only sustain the momentum created in Beijing but would also be important for evaluating the results achieved. The establishment of a special high-level post in the Office of the Secretary-General had been recommended and implemented. It had also been recommended that there should be a link between the Office of the Secretary-General's Special Adviser on Gender

Issues and the Division for the Advancement of Women, but that recommendation did not seem to have been implemented. Her delegation welcomed the establishment of the Inter-Agency Committee on the Advancement of Women, which would link the United Nations system with its member States.

39. As to the follow-up and implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference, Tanzania had undertaken various activities which were described in the report sent to the Secretariat. At the international level, the General Assembly and its subsidiary bodies had responsibility for coordination of the outcome of the Conference, giving it the necessary priority, since issues of the advancement of women did not refer only to women but were concerned also with the actual formulation and implementation of development policies, and, ultimately, the advancement of women would have an impact on society as a whole.

40. Mr. Khan (Pakistan), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

41. Mr. PHANIT (Thailand), after commending the reports of the Secretary-General, said that his delegation supported the work of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women and stressed the need to introduce measures to reduce the backlog of that Committee's work, such as increasing the number of meetings. Thailand also welcomed the establishment of the Inter-Agency Committee on the Advancement of Women in the Administrative Committee on Coordination and hoped that it would facilitate the mainstreaming of gender equality in the work of the United Nations system.

42. With regard to the status of women in the Secretariat, although the progress made in that respect was satisfactory, it was disturbing that under the financial crisis it would not be possible to achieve the goals established in the Platform for Action by the year 2000. Furthermore, Thailand agreed with the Secretary-General that the target of 25 per cent of policy-making and decision-making posts for women should continue to be a guiding factor and called for full cooperation from senior managers of the various organizations of the United Nations system.

43. Recognizing the value of the contribution made by women, who made up half its population, Thailand had dedicated its efforts to the empowerment of women, since that was also an important contributing factor in national development. During the past decade, his country had made notable progress towards achieving the three goals of the United Nations Decade for Women. In the area of employment, women constituted around 47 per cent of the labour force, and much of Thailand's economic success could be attributed to women. In order to protect further the basic rights of women, his Government had increased paid maternity leave from 60 to 90 days. In the area of education, Thailand had succeeded in reducing illiteracy. The slightly higher illiteracy rate among women than among men was due to the fact that women had less access to education, rather than to discrimination. Currently, the duration of compulsory schooling was 9 years, having been increased from 6 years; in the near future, it would increase to 12 years. Great progress had also been made in the area of health, and women had been its major beneficiaries. Access to improved health services, safe drinking water and sanitation had become more widespread, and the maternal mortality rate had decreased significantly.

44. The issue of the advancement of women had gained further momentum following the Beijing Conference. The international community had continued to work towards achieving the goals set by the Conference; his Government had taken numerous steps to implement the Platform for Action, to which national priority had been assigned, and which had been integrated into the long-term plan for women (1993-2011). In addition, for the first time in the country's history, the eighth national economic and social development plan (1997-2001) was a people-centred plan in which women's concerns figured prominently.

45. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action had been translated into the Thai language with the assistance of UNDP. Nation-wide seminars were being held to publicize the Declaration and Platform, particularly among women at the grass-roots level. His Government also planned to upgrade the Office of the National Commission on Women's Affairs to a department, and two new standing bodies had been established under the Commission with the mandate to implement strategic objectives contained in the Platform for Action.

46. At the regional level, his Government welcomed the role of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in promoting the Platform for Action and assisting member countries in its implementation and in preparing project proposals designed to mobilize funds for the implementation of operational activities. At the international level, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was an important mechanism for promoting the advancement of women. His country had acceded to the Convention in 1985, entering reservations to seven articles; he was pleased to report, however, that five of the reservations had been withdrawn during the past decade.

47. While his country, along with the rest of the international community, could claim that de jure discrimination against women had been eliminated, de facto discrimination still existed in many societies, largely because of certain attitudes and values. The promotion of gender equality was the shared responsibility of men and women; it was necessary to change the socio-cultural traditions and practices which had unfortunately discriminated against women for generations. Doing so would require concerted and resolute action.

48. Mr. MEKDAD (Syrian Arab Republic) said that for 25 years his country had assigned high priority to the advancement of women. Such priority was one of the main characteristics of modern Syrian culture; moreover, throughout history, Arab women had always played a very important role. Men and women equally formed the basis of all creative action. As a tribute to women, the President of the Republic had proclaimed 21 May as Mothers' Day.

49. The reports submitted by the Secretary-General and the statements by various bodies and organizations of the United Nations system had highlighted the importance of promoting the advancement of women. He welcomed the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, particularly the aspects relating to education, health, justice and the elimination of violence against women, and the measures aimed at increasing women's participation in decision-making and economic development. His Government, in partnership with local organizations, had developed a broad information campaign concerning the achievements made at Beijing. A national committee had been established, composed of several women

who occupied senior posts and chaired by the Minister of Education, to ensure a follow-up to the Beijing Conference. His country assigned high priority to the education and health of all, particularly women, as a key factor in their advancement and empowerment. In Syria, the female illiteracy rate had declined and women represented 50 per cent of all students, including at the university level. With regard to health, fertility rates had decreased, as had maternal and infant mortality rates.

50. His country also placed great emphasis on solving the problems of rural women. In addition, its domestic legislation had been revised to ensure equality of rights for men and women. Women were being trained to plan an appropriate role in the decision-making process. Syrian women and men received equal pay for equal work, and women were represented in the Parliament, the ministries, the judiciary and all areas of the country's economic and social life.

51. As a result of national economic and social development strategies, it had been possible to address very important aspects of the poverty eradication strategy, and to promote social and cultural values. Violence against women was of limited scope owing to Syria's social traditions and customs.

52. At the Beijing Conference and other United Nations conferences which had preceded it, the point had been made repeatedly that foreign occupation was an obstacle to the realization of women's inalienable human rights. One of the basic international obligations was solidarity with a view to ending foreign occupation and ensuring compliance with the commitments made. He called upon all peace-loving countries which defended women's rights to support the Arab women who were suffering under the Israeli occupation of the Golan, southern Lebanon and the Palestinian territories.

53. His country valued the cooperation provided by the various United Nations specialized agencies which had worked on local projects and public-awareness campaigns in sectors of key importance. Such activities reflected the common interest in promoting the welfare of children, women and the family. The advancement and empowerment of women and the enjoyment of their rights were the yardsticks by which the progress of each country could be measured.

54. Ms. ENKHTSETSEG (Mongolia) noted with satisfaction the important work accomplished by the United Nations system in compliance with the decisions of the Beijing Conference. She shared the view of the Secretary-General that a key aspect of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action was the need for the intergovernmental forums and secretariats to ensure the mainstreaming of a gender perspective into their programmes and policies. She welcomed the steps taken to that end by many organizations of the United Nations system and supported the decision of the Economic and Social Council to select the issue of mainstreaming a gender perspective within the United Nations system as a cross-cutting theme for the coordination segment of its 1997 substantive session. Also commendable was the mainstreaming of a gender perspective into anti-poverty strategies and programmes at the most recent sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women and the Economic and Social Council.

55. She welcomed the efforts made by the United Nations Statistical Commission to develop a minimum national social data set, disaggregated by gender, as a

guide for national statistical services in monitoring the implementation of the outcomes of recent United Nations conferences, and encouraged the Commission to consider adopting the minimum data set, together with the recommendations, so that the regional commissions could conduct pilot studies in each region on the availability and quality of the required statistics.

56. As was clear from the Secretary-General's report, the regional commissions had organized a variety of activities as a follow-up to the Beijing Conference. ESCAP, for instance, had convened several regional meetings on such topics as promoting women's participation in decision-making, protecting women's rights and fighting violence against women, and strengthening national machineries for the advancement of women, which had resulted in the formulation of sound policy recommendations.

57. She welcomed the appointment of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and the establishment of the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality as an important step towards system-wide coordination and mainstreaming. Nevertheless, she noted with concern that the current financial crisis of the Organization had led to delays in the provision of sufficient human and financial resources to strengthen the Division for the Advancement of Women of the Secretariat. It was to be hoped that the Division's ability to carry out the tasks envisaged in the Platform for Action would not be impaired thereby.

58. Since the successful implementation of the decisions adopted at Beijing would no doubt depend to a great extent on the availability of sufficient resources, Mongolia welcomed the specific commitments undertaken by the organizations of the United Nations system, which were contained in the report of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (E/1996/16), to allocate a certain part of their resources and funds to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action.

59. General Assembly resolution 50/203 had reaffirmed the need for new and additional resources to be mobilized in order to achieve the goals set at Beijing. In that connection, Mongolia welcomed the Economic and Social Council's decision to request the Secretary-General to prepare a report, in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), on all aspects of new and innovative ideas for generating funds to meet globally agreed commitments and priorities.

60. Mongolia also supported the idea that those States which had committed themselves to the 20:20 initiative should fully integrate a gender perspective into its implementation. General Assembly resolution 50/203 stated, inter alia, that Governments had the primary responsibility for implementing the Platform for Action. Mongolia had elaborated and adopted a national plan of action for the advancement of women for the years 1996-2000. The draft of that plan had been extensively discussed in the National Assembly under the theme of "Women in development". Participants in the discussion included senior Government officials as well as representatives of governmental and non-governmental organizations, private enterprises and the academic community, thus ensuring a broad-based discussion of the situation of women in Mongolia and the formulation of a future strategy.

61. In compliance with General Assembly resolution 50/203, the plan of action for the advancement of women had set targets for the year 2000 which included, inter alia, a reduction in the number of people, and especially women, living in poverty; a decrease in the maternal and infant mortality rates; and an increase in secondary school enrolment.

62. Mongolia had also created a development fund for women with an initial contribution of $800,000 from UNDP to promote employment opportunities and income generation for women living in poverty. In collaboration with the World Bank, a seminar was to be organized on poverty reduction and social security policies in Mongolia. The seminar would discuss, inter alia, the critical situation of single women who were heads of households.

63. The plan of action for the advancement of women was being implemented in conjunction with the relevant national strategies for the follow-up to the other major United Nations conferences on children, population and development, and social development, as well as the poverty alleviation programme. In addition, the objectives of the plan of action were being integrated into the national development strategy. To conclude, Mongolia agreed on the need for measures to be taken to eliminate the backlog in the work of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

64. Ms. THAHIM (Pakistan) said that the steps taken to mainstream a gender perspective within the United Nations system had been satisfactory, but it was now time to implement policy decisions and to use the Organization's scarce resources to alleviate the suffering of poor women, educate them and create facilities for their health care. While the absence of any reporting of progress at the national level was understandable, a system of interim reporting on national action plans should be established to address the problem. Resident Coordinators could give guidance to developing countries in the preparation and execution of those plans. Pakistan supported the strategies of the United Nations Development Fund for Women and the Fund's goal of increasing core resources in support of its outreach to the developing countries. The United Nations International Training and Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) should also be strengthened so that it could continue to integrate a gender perspective in its activities. New avenues for forging partnerships with non-governmental organizations must be explored so that the economic empowerment of women could be extended to the grass-roots level. The fight against female poverty in the developing countries must continue, since poverty undermined women's development. In order to curb the rampant violence against women, measures must be taken to create viable legislative, administrative and political frameworks to protect them. Women all over the world were also the victims of armed conflicts, as in the case of the raping of women in Bosnia and Herzegovina by the Serbs. In Jammu and Kashmir, Indian army personnel had raped, sexually abused, molested and abducted women. Those crimes must be investigated and prosecuted in accordance with current international law.

65. The Government of Pakistan, under the leadership of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, had created an institutional framework to promote and protect the rights of women all over the country. A separate Ministry, headed by a woman, was fulfilling its mandate of bringing about the empowerment of women in all spheres of life, by mainstreaming the gender perspective into national policies and

contributing to the elaboration and enactment of legislation to address the specific needs of women. Provincial departments ensured coordination and effective implementation of Federal Governments decisions.

66. Efforts were being made to reserve 25 per cent of the seats in Parliament for women. Following Pakistan's accession to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women earlier that year, the Government was in the process of preparing its first report, which was due in April 1997, and a nation-wide campaign had been launched to create awareness about domestic and other forms of violence against women. With the help of non-governmental organizations, centres were being established throughout the country, under a phased programme, to protect women and to provide them with free legal aid. The Commission of Inquiry for Women, comprised of judges and eminent lawyers and scholars, was reviewing existing laws which discriminated against women in any way.

67. The Social Action Programme focused on human resource development in relation to women. Over 100,000 women were being trained as primary health workers and a compulsory education act had been adopted to achieve the goal of universal primary education. During the previous two years, the Ministry of Women's Development had financed 283 projects, 98 of them in the public sector and 195 implemented by non-governmental organizations. The first Women's Bank, with 33 branches all over Pakistan, provided credit to women for business ventures. In order to redress gender disparities, particularly in education, health and employment, a national training and resource centre for women in development was being established with the assistance of Japan International Cooperation Agency. The Centre would be the first national mechanism devoted exclusively to the integration of the gender perspective into the socio-economic development of Pakistan. With regard to the follow-up to the Beijing Platform for Action, four workshops had been held in the provinces, culminating in a national workshop. Pakistan's national action plan was currently under preparation.

68. Ms. ACHOURI (Tunisia) said that Tunisia attached high priority in its economic and social development plans and programmes to the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and believed that women were a vital part of the process of building a society and promoting development. After independence, the laws in Tunisia had been gradually reformed to create the necessary conditions for women to achieve full political, economic and social equality with men. Thanks to the enactment of the code of personal law, polygamy had been abolished, forced marriages prohibited and divorce legalized. The dignity of women was now being restored and the foundations laid for a new and more just organization of the family.

69. As part of the changes which had taken place in Tunisia in 1987, the new political direction taken by President Abidine Ben Ali had made possible the promulgation of basic laws, such as the law on parties and the national pact, in which the important principle of equality was put on the same footing as the principle of freedom. The integration of women into the management of public affairs was therefore not only part of an economic policy strategy aimed at achieving integrated and sustainable development but was also consistent with a coherent and global perspective on human rights. In that connection, future

activities would focus on mainstreaming equality before the law into the everyday life of women. To that end, various mechanisms had been developed, such as the Ministry of Women and Family Affairs and the Centre for Research, Documentation and Information on Women. A number of legislative reforms had also been completed aimed at modernizing the laws and incorporating a human rights dimension into them. In keeping with those changes, the concept of a wife's obedience to her husband would be replaced in the code of personal law by mutual respect, the right of guardianship of the mother would be strengthened and a fund would be created to guarantee the payment of alimony in order to protect divorced women and their children. Under the Penal Code, matrimonial ties would be considered as grounds for exemption from criminal liability when punishment for domestic violence was being considered.

70. In addition, the right to work had been reaffirmed for all women, and the principle of non-discrimination against women was enshrined in the labour code. In the code on nationality it was stipulated that women could transmit their nationality to their children with the husband's consent. Educational reform had the aim of preparing young people for life without discrimination on grounds of sex, social origin, race or religion, and also of ending school abandonment by girls, especially in rural areas. Through the integration of family planning in primary health care programmes, Tunisia's birth rate had become the lowest in Africa. The purpose of that new approach was to disseminate a new family culture based on human rights and oriented towards equality and the physical and mental health of wives and mothers.

71. Tunisia felt that international cooperation was essential for implementing the conclusions of the Fourth World Conference on Women because it reinforced the measures taken by Governments to improve the situation of women in their countries. Her Government also felt that United Nations organs and bodies should give greater support to the implementation of those conclusions. It therefore welcomed the steps taken by the majority of United Nations bodies, secretariats and programmes to integrate a gender perspective in all the activities of the system, but believed that it was necessary to determine the practical and financial repercussions of that measure.

72. As indicated in General Assembly resolution 50/203, adequate resources needed to be mobilized at the national and international levels, as well as new and additional resources for the developing countries, in particular African countries and the least developed countries. In that context, Tunisia welcomed the efforts made by the United Nations bodies to mobilize additional resources in order to fulfil the Beijing commitments. It also welcomed the decision taken by the World Food Programme to allocate 60 per cent of its resources to eliminating the disparity between the sexes in socio-economic indicators, the activities carried out by UNDP to combat the feminization of poverty, specific projects submitted at the UNESCO General Conference to improve the situation of women, the resolutions and recommendations of the Commission on the Status of Women concerning the advancement of women, and the efforts made by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, UNIFEM and the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women. Lastly, her delegation paid tribute to the non-governmental organizations for their valuable contribution to the formulation and implementation of national action strategies and programmes for the advancement of women.

73. Mr. HOUANSOU (Benin) said that the Fourth World Conference on Women, which had had the objective of promoting the role of women through equality, development and peace, had alerted the population of Benin to the critical situation of women throughout the world. Benin had established a committee responsible for implementing the conclusions of the Conference, which had already organized information and sensitization activities about the results of the Conference, and seminars which had been attended by a large number of representatives of the mass media. A ministry on the status of women had also been established, and it was headed by a woman.

74. Although the situation of women in Benin was not very satisfactory, there were encouraging signs. Women were participating in political and economic life, in the public and private administration, and in education and health. They were also receiving equal pay for equal work. Although much remained to be done, measures had already been taken to improve the situation of women, including the introduction of free primary education for girls in rural areas. Within the context of the implementation of the Beijing conclusions, Benin had accorded priority to poverty eradication, the strengthening of health services and education, and the participation of women in public life. It had therefore decided to allocate a proportion of its budget, much greater than the figures indicated in the Oslo consensus on the 20:20 initiative, to improving basic social services. While reaffirming its commitment, Benin called on development partners to contribute to the efforts that were being made by the developing countries, especially the countries of Africa and the least developed countries, and called on the developed countries to allocate 7 per cent of GNP to official development assistance.

75. Benin welcomed the progress achieved in the United Nations in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action, for example the appointment of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues. His Government believed that it was necessary to correct the imbalance in the representation of women in senior level posts, and ensure equitable geographical representation. His delegation therefore supported the idea of drawing up a list of qualified women who could be selected as special representatives. Benin felt that the priorities of the United Nations should not suffer as a result of the financial crisis, which in reality was no more than a crisis of cash and of political will. Benin, a small African country which was a member of the group of least developed countries, fulfilled its financial obligations to the United Nations. In that context, it called on the other countries to demonstrate the political will to help the Organization overcome its current financial difficulties.

76. His delegation welcomed with satisfaction the work carried out by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and supported the proposal that the Committee should hold two annual sessions of three weeks each, preceded by meetings of a working group after 1997. It supported the proposed changes to improve that Committee's work, the progress made in the consideration of reports, and the incorporation of the results of the Fourth World Conference on Women in the reports submitted by States parties. However, it felt that the Committee should continue to seek ways of taking up reports as they were submitted.

77. His delegation commended UNIFEM for the activities carried out for the benefit of women and for having assembled the necessary funds for its work, an admirable effort during a period of financial crisis. It called on the Fund to broaden its activities in the political and economic spheres to cover education and women's literacy, especially in rural areas, since education was the cornerstone of poverty eradication and the advancement of women.

78. Benin felt that the factors which, according to the Platform for Action, gave rise to the phenomenon of traffic in women and girls, such as increasing ease of movement from one country to another and the rise in the number of female migrant workers, were rooted in poverty, which affected women to a greater extent than men. In order to eradicate poverty, national efforts were essential, as well as international cooperation through, inter alia, the implementation of the 20:20 concept, the allocation of 0.7 per cent of GNP to official development assistance, the incorporation of a social dimension in development policies, the solution of the debt problem and more equitable international trade.

79. Mr. NAJEM (Lebanon) said that international cooperation to promote and encourage respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms without distinction of any kind was one of the purposes laid down in the Charter of the United Nations. Those commitments were incorporated in the documents adopted at the conferences held in Vienna, Cairo, Copenhagen and Beijing, and among them priority had been accorded to women's exercise of their rights and the advancement of women.

80. In order to implement the recommendations made at the Fourth World Conference on Women, Lebanon had established a national committee on women's matters which was responsible for coordination with the official authorities, both central and local, and with non-governmental organizations of the League of Arab States at the level of the Arab countries, and with intergovernmental bodies, non-governmental organizations, the United Nations and its specialized agencies at the international level.

81. The national committee had organized a seminar on all the issues considered at Beijing. The expert groups established by the committee had drawn up a national strategy and a triennial plan of action with the objective of guaranteeing the equality of women before the law, the participation of women in all political institutions, an increase in the participation of women in economic activities, the advancement of rural women and support for women in the territories occupied by Israel.

82. After the Fourth World Conference on Women, a number of legal instruments which affected women had been repealed, in particular concerning their capacity to engage in trade without prior permission from their husbands, and to give evidence. The retirement age was now the same for both sexes. In the area of education, the graduation rate among girls at all levels of instruction had increased. The percentage of women in the liberal professions which required a university education had also increased, as well as the participation in women in economic activities.

83. In conclusion, he said that Lebanon, as well as having acceded to all the conventions on human rights and women's rights, announced its accession to the

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and expressed its desire for a better future in which the values of justice and equality would prevail.

84. Mr. SY (Organization of African Unity) said that the period following the Beijing Conference had witnessed collective efforts by African Governments to implement the commitments made in the Platform for Action. For example, during the sixty-fourth Ordinary Session of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Council of Ministers, a resolution had been adopted on the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women. A Plan of Action to advance the status of women was being drawn up as part of policy programmes to ensure a wider gender perspective within OAU, which would be even more visible within the new structure of the integrated Secretariat of the African Economic Community.

85. A number of regional conferences had been held. The Sixth Conference of Ministers of Education, held in Dakar in 1993, had emphasized the need for priority to be given to children of school age and vulnerable groups, particularly girls and illiterate women. The Pan-African Conference on the Education of Girls, held in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, had subsequently launched an appeal to all actors in education to stress the priority of girls' education in educational development plans.

86. Recently, OAU had organized an African Conference on the Empowerment of Women through Functional Literacy and the Education of the Girl Child in Kampala, Uganda, from 9 to 19 September 1996. That Conference had adopted the Kampala Declaration and Framework for Action. Those documents had focused on safety and security for girls in school, alternative approaches in education and functional literacy as a means of empowering women. The Declaration noted with concern that education for girls and functional literacy for women continued to be severely constrained throughout Africa. It also took note of the special needs of people with disabilities, resulting in a limitation of their educational opportunities.

87. The issue of women and peace was another area which formed part of the OAU programme to be implemented at the continental level in the course of 1997. The contribution of UNIFEM, in collaboration with UNDP, to strengthening the institutional capacity of OAU's Women Unit was to be commended. OAU looked forward to much closer cooperation in the future, especially in the area of peace-building and the role of women in conflict resolution.

88. OAU joined other delegations in appealing for greater attention to the eradication of poverty. Only collective efforts, political will and closer coordination would enable resolutions to be transformed into action, thereby considerably improving the status of women all over the world.

89. Mrs. ESPINOSA (Mexico) resumed the Chair.

90. Mr. SCHATZER (International Organization for Migration) said that at least 50 million women in the world were currently estimated to be migrants. Many of those women were especially vulnerable both as migrants and women, since they had limited access to legal employment and almost always earned less than men

and native-born women; they had less access to health care services and their rights were frequently violated, all too often with impunity.

91. Fortunately, the international community had started to focus on the special needs of migrant women. At the Beijing Conference, Governments and international and non-governmental organizations had shown interest in empowering women the world over. To date, however, few practical measures had been taken in that respect.

92. Recognizing the necessity for prompt, concrete action, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) had created a working group specifically to examine gender issues in programme policy, and, in November 1995, the IOM Council had resolved to identify the special needs of all migrant women and to take those needs into account in all IOM projects and services. The policy stressed that IOM would improve awareness of the specific conditions and needs of migrant women, ensure equal access to all IOM projects and services so that women would be able to participate in and benefit from them fully, and design and implement projects and services specific to migrant women.

93. Those measures were especially necessary to combat trafficking in women. Many women, lured by the promise of well-paid jobs abroad and unable to migrate legally, accepted the services of traffickers who sold them fraudulent documents and other services. Once firmly trapped within an illegal migration environment, women were vulnerable to all kinds of abuses including forced prostitution.

94. Within its broader objective of promoting orderly migration and helping to combat migrant trafficking, IOM was carrying out a number of activities to promote the establishment of effective migration systems and render assistance to victims of trafficking. Since 1993 IOM had started to foster international dialogue on that issue and had encouraged the holding of informal consultations between Governments. The following year, IOM had organized an international seminar on the issue of migrant trafficking and, as a follow-up, a regional seminar in Central America in 1995. Another such regional forum would be held in Asia towards the end of 1996. Such forums provided an opportunity for authorities to exchange views and information on key issues and individual experiences, and to explore policies and procedures to combat the phenomenon. They also fostered the establishment of coordinated legislative and policy approaches by Governments that sought to ensure that traffickers would not find havens in certain countries or benefit from the lack of harmonized measures.

95. Trafficking in women for sexual exploitation had also been addressed at the European Union Conference in Vienna in June 1996, organized by IOM, that brought together Governments of the European Union and associated States, international organizations and non-governmental organizations. The United Nations had participated in those events, and IOM had in turn participated in activities organized by the United Nations.

96. In addition to its investigations into the trafficking of women for sexual exploitation, which included the problem in Central and Eastern Europe and trafficking in Austria, Italy and the Dominican Republic, IOM had implemented information dissemination programmes in countries of origin in an effort to inform women of the risks of irregular migration as well as of the potential

hazards of labour migration. IOM also published a quarterly newsletter called Trafficking in Migrants which regularly focused on issues related to trafficking in women. Furthermore, IOM provided individual assistance to women vulnerable to abuse and women who had been victims of trafficking, thereby enabling them to return home in dignity and safety. In addition, IOM had initiated two pilot projects for the return and reintegration of trafficked Chinese, Cambodian and Vietnamese women and children from countries in South East Asia.

97. Trafficking in women, and the violence, discrimination and abuse faced by migrant women, constituted a growing threat to fundamental human values. Combating those abuses and safeguarding the rights of migrant women was an important priority for IOM, which called on Governments, international organizations and other relevant institutions to promote the search for possible solutions and ways to collaborate on that issue, seeking to harmonize effective legislation and policy and ensure respect for and promote the rights of migrant women. When searching for appropriate solutions, it was also necessary to bear in mind the root causes of most female migration and trafficking in women: the poverty, lack of opportunities, scarce resources and political and economic instability which characterized far too much of the modern world. IOM welcomed those activities of the United Nations which focused on the advancement of women; in particular it supported the call to combat violence against women migrant workers and traffic in women and girls.

98. Ms. AL-AWADI (Kuwait), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that, with reference to disappeared persons, it was sufficient to mention Part IV, Section D, of the Report of the Secretary-General on the Work of the Organization (A/51/1). In that document, the Secretary-General had expressed his concern that Iraq was still not complying with Security Council resolutions. In paragraph 829, the Secretary-General said that it was a matter of great concern to him that more than 600 Kuwaiti and third-country nationals were still missing in Iraq.

99. Her Government once again called on Iraq to comply with its obligations in that regard. In paragraph 807 of the same document, the Secretary-General said that, in the seventh year of sanctions against Iraq, he deplored the fact that their easing or lifting was blocked by Iraq's continuing failure to comply with a number of obligations in the relevant Security Council resolutions. Her Government reiterated that those obligations included the question of the Kuwaiti prisoners held in Iraqi gaols. Regarding Iraq's statement on the political rights of Kuwaiti women, the representative of the Iraqi regime was the least qualified person to speak on that subject.

The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.